



## Bird

By Crystal Chan

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Entrenched secrets, mysterious spirits, and an astonishing friendship weave together in this extraordinary and haunting debut that *School Library Journal* calls “a powerful story about loss and moving on.”

*Nothing matters. Only Bird matters. And he flew away.*

Jewel never knew her brother Bird, but all her life she has lived in his shadow. Her parents blame Grandpa for the tragedy of their family’s past: they say that Grandpa attracted a malevolent spirit—a duppy—into their home. Grandpa hasn’t spoken a word since. Now Jewel is twelve, and she lives in a house full of secrets and impenetrable silence.

Jewel is sure that no one will ever love her like they loved Bird, until the night that she meets a mysterious boy in a tree. Grandpa is convinced that the boy is a duppy, but Jewel knows that he is something more. And that maybe—just maybe—the time has come to break through the stagnant silence of the past.

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## **Bird By Crystal Chan Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 4–6—Jewel never met her brother. On the day she was born, he tried to fly off a cliff and died. Her parents believe that Grandpa's nickname for his grandson, Bird, caused a bad spirit, a duppy, to trick the boy into believing he could fly. Twelve years later, Grandpa has still not spoken a word and Jewel is fed up with her moody parents and unloving household. She meets a boy who calls himself John, her brother's real name. They share their hopes and dreams and Jewel opens up about visiting the cliff to bury her worries as small stones. Grandpa thinks John is a duppy in disguise, come to cause more harm. Jewel is a multilayered, emotional character who struggles to come to terms with her family's issues. The mixture of superstition and science creates a wonderful juxtaposition in this powerful story about loss and moving on.—Clare A. Dombrowski, Amesbury Public Library, MA

From [Booklist](#)

“In my house we wield silence like shields and swords: We use it to push people away or injure them.” Ever since 12-year-old Jewel’s brother died by jumping off a cliff on the day she was born, her grandfather hasn’t uttered a word. He’s the one who gave his grandson, John, the nickname “Bird” and told him that, one day, Bird would fly. Jewel’s Jamaican grandpa and her dad believe in duppies, or harmful spirits, and think grandpa’s nickname attracted one. Now, Jewel is living in a house of fear, silence, and guilt. Jewel returns to the cliff where her brother died in order to connect with him and feels the place, unlike her family, speaks to her. When she meets a boy in town for the summer, she, a geology lover, and he, obsessed with space exploration, become friends. But this boy has secrets of his own, and, eventually, someone is going to have to talk. This is a slow read—thoughtful and introspective about the dynamics of a grieving family—and contemplative readers will be rewarded by Jewel’s journey. Grades 4-7. --Ann Kelley

Review

"Jewel’s observant reflections on her rural-Iowa world give this debut its considerable charm...the strong opening bodes well for future endeavors." (*Kirkus Reviews, November 2013*)

“Thoughtful and introspective about the dynamics of a grieving family . . . contemplative readers will be rewarded by Jewel’s journey." (*Booklist, December 2013*)

"Jewel is a multilayered, emotional character . . . . The mixture of superstition and science creates a wonderful juxtaposition in this powerful story about loss and moving on." (*School Library Journal, January 2014*)

"The voice of 12-year-old Jewel carries readers through this lyrical and buoyant debut from Crystal Chan. . . . Chan's strong characterizations and her way with words make her a writer to watch." (*Shelf Awareness*)

"Daughter of a Jamaican father and her half-Mexican, half-white mother, Jewel has always felt out of place in her small Iowa town. . . . When Jewel meets John, an adopted black boy staying with his uncle, she finds a kindred spirit, someone as out of place as she is. . . . Chan has carefully crafted John and Jewel as effective foils for each other; their shared interest in science propels multiple metaphors that help Jewel figure out what is solid and knowable versus what must be taken on faith or intuited. . . both character arcs show a deep respect for readers’ abilities to negotiate the complexities of belief and doubt, and to find meaning via character reflection." (*Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books, March 2014*)

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### Christopher Milbrandt:

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#### Margaret Velasquez:

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